

Eliz. Dawson. 1698

A
RELATION
Of the fearful Estate
OF
FRANCIS SPIRA,
In the Year 1548.

Compiled by Nath. Bacon, Esq;

Prov. 14. 14.

*The Back-slider in heart shall be filled
with his own wayes.*

LONDON,

Printed for Edward Thomas, at the
Adam and Eve in Little Britain,
MDC LX VIII. P

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RELATION

Of the fearful Effects

OF

FRANCIS SMITH

In the Year 1748.

Compiled by Mrs. Anne Smith

Printed by J. Smith


The Author is now in the
City of London.

LONDON,

Printed for E. Smith, at the
Sign of the Green Tree,
in St. Paul's Church-yard.



THE PREFACE.

 Or truth of this History ensuing, besides circumstances of place, person, time, occasion, so exactly observed; I refer my self to the relation of those Godly men, who in several Languages have manifested to the *world* the several passages thereof: and although I am not ignorant, that at the first they were not onely not credited, but also discredited and slandered, by such as found them to be a
A 3 blur

The Preface.

Blur to the *Roman* Profession, yet they lost not their lustre thereby; but being acquitted by many Compurgators of several Nations, and some of the *Romish* Religion, being all of them Spectators of this Tragedy, it occasioned not only a further manifestation and confirmation of the truth, but also a large and more frequent confluence, to see that which they had formerly only heard of. This partly appeareth out of the succeeding Story: but more fully out of an Apology written by *Vergerius*, Bishop of *Justinople*, who was accused for dispersing the fame of his Example to the stain of Popery; in which Apology to *N. Rottan*, Suffragan of *Padua*, is shortly and plainly declared, what was said, what was done, and who were

The Preface.

were present. If that it be demanded, what moved me to compile this Treatise of *Spira*, tell them, that it should teach fear and reverence; and indeed among all those that come to see him, few or none return unshaken. *Vergerius* in his first Epistle saith, I would fain go see him again, but I exceedingly fear and tremble; and in his Apology saith, it is such a rare example, as I would willingly go to the furthest parts of the World to hear or see the like. The Lady *Jane* to her Fathers Chaplain (that had fallen into *Spira's* sin) saith, Remember the lamentable estate of *Spira*. I acknowledge that there hath been formerly a Book published in our Mother tongue, concerning this subject; but as far as I can

The Preface.

learn (for I could never yet obtaine any of them) it was nothing so large and various as this present Treatise, and as I have heard, a translation of onely one of the Tractates from whence I have gathered this present discourse in part. Concerning my Care and Fidelity in this business, it is such, as I may truly say without changing of colour, that there is not one sentence of all this Work attributed unto the person of *Spira*, but it hath its Warrant, either from the Epistles of *Vergerius* and *Gribauldus*, Professors of the Law at *Padua*, or from the discourses of *Henry Scriver* a Scotch Man, *Sigismund Gelons* a Transilvanian, and *Mart. Bocha* a Divine of *Basil*; neither have I taken any other

The Preface.

other libertie then as a relation to weave the foresaid Discourses one within another, so as those which under several Writers were before counted several, are now by my indeavours reduced into one intire Historie, connexed by due succession of time and occasion, as punctually as could be aimed at, by the circumstances noted in the Writings of those holy and learned men before named.

A 5

N. B.

TO

1875

1875



TO THE
AUTHOR and READER
OF THIS
HISTORY.

Some scattered parcels of this Story lay
In Foreign Papers ; which hadst not found a
(way

Thus to collect, had { been obvious prey,
 { Never seen the day.

Reader, wouldst see how sinning against the
(light,
Will quench, and leave the soul in a sad night
Of discontent. Come hither Reader then, look
(here,
And learn light-quenching sins to fear.

Reader, wouldst see the comfort-breathing
(Spirit
To grieve, what curseless grief it doth demerit?
Come hither then, look here.

Here see a soul that's all despair; a man
All Hell; a Spirit all wound: who can
A wounded spirit bear?

Reader

Reader would'st see (what may'st thou never
feel)

Despaire, Racks, Torments, whips of burning
steel?

Come then, look here.

Eehold this man, this furnace, in whose heart
Sin hath created Hells: Oh, in each part

What flames appear!

His thoughts all stings, words swords, brim-
stone his breath,

His sight flames, wishes curses, life a death:

A thousand deaths live in him, he not dead,

A breathing curse in living scalding lead:

And yet he lives our Monument, to tell

How black are quenched lights;

Quencht joys are double frights,

Black dayes are double nights;

Heaven tasted, lost, a double Hell.

I have call'd thee Reader, pray so be,

Read this, that others read not thee,

Legis Historiam

Ne sis Historicus.

M. N.

Extra.



EXtraordinary Examples
of Divine Justice, GOD
never intended for a
nine dayes wonder; else would
he, when he exemplified *Lots*
Wife, have turned her into a
Statue of melting Snow, not
of lasting Salt; which stood,
as *Josephus* tells us, till his Age,
after the Destruction of *Jeru-*
salem, and as some Travellers
report, till at this day; *ut quod-*
dam hominibus præstaret condi-
mentum, quo sapiant unde illud
caveatur exemplum: *Aug. de*
Civit. Dei, lib. 16. cap. 30. for
a season against corruption, a
preservative against Apostacy.
This Tragedy, when fresh and
new, was the conversion and
confirmation of sundry Wor-
thies.

thies *Vergerius*, a dayly Spectator thereof, forsaking a rich Bishoprick of *Justinopolis*, and tents of Antichrist, went to *Basil*, and dyed a worthy protestant: many Nations had Eye witnesses of their own Students then in the University of *Padua*, who penned the story, the Copies whereof are frequently revived; our English ones were very defective, and now worn out of shops and hands; sundry Manuscripts of this abroad, imperfect; which moved me to compare this labour of a worthy Gentleman (who faithfully translated it out of *Italian, French, and Dutch Letters*) with the *Latine* of *Cælius Secundus, Curio, Matthæus Gribauldus*, professors of the Civill Law in *Padua*: *Sigismond Gelons* a *Transylvanian*,
Henricus


Henricus Scotus, all daily Visitors of *Spira*, and find it accord with them. Touching *Spira's* person, I find most learned Writers do incline to the right and hopeful hand; moved by his sweet, humble, and charitable speeches; some few desperate ones excepted, that fell from him in some little agonies, which kept him fasting and watching about six moneths space, eating nothing but what was forced down his throat. The summ of *Calvins* and *Borrhaus* their counsels is, (who write largely of the use of this pattern) that all learn to take heed of backsliding, which Gods soul abhors, and not to dally with Conscience, an Hell on Earth, if justly incensed; more to be feared than the Spanish Inquisition, or all the Strapadoes & torments in the world; and

and to take heed of *Spira's* principal Errors, which were, to dispute with Satan over-busily in time of weaknesse, especially to reason, and conclude from present sense, to Gods past Reprobation, and future Damnation: both which is hard, if possible, for any man to determine in his own, much more in others cases. So commending thee to his grace, who is able to establish thee to the end, I bid thee farewell, and hope well, while the space of Grace lasteth : *Dum Spiras, speras*, so mayest thou take good, and no hurt, by the reading of this terrible Example.

A



A
RELATION
of the Fearfull
Estate of
Francis Spira.

N the Year, 1548.
when the Glorious
Son of the Gospel
was but newly ri-
sen in *Europe*, in
the dayes of the Reign of *Ed-
ward*, the Sixth of that Name,
King of *ENGLAND*, in the
Territory, and under the
Jurisdiction of the City of
Venice, being the very border
of *Italy*, in the town of *Citta-
della*,

della, lived one *Francis Spira*, a Civil Lawyer, an Advocate of great rank and esteem, being of known learning and eloquence, of great experience, of carriage circumspect and severe, his speech grave and composed, his countenance sharp and austere, every way besitting that authority whereunto he was advanced, endowed with outward blessings of Wife and eleven children, and wealth in abundance. What his worst parts were, I have no other warrant than his own words, which (if not tainted overmuch with the bitterness of a desperate mind, and bearing a countenance rather of passion than of sober confession) may seem to add a period to all further commendations.

I was (saith he) excessively covetous of money, and accordingly applied my self to get by injustice, corrupting justice by deceit, inventing tricks to delude justice; good causes I either defended deceitfully, or sold them to the adversary perfidiously; ill causes I maintained with all my might; I wittingly opposed the known truth; and the trust committed unto me, I either betrayed or perverted. Thus having worn out fourty four years, or thereabouts, and the news of the new, or rather newly revived Opinions of Luther coming into those parts, represented an object of novelty unto him; who being as desirous to know, as he was famous for knowledge, suffered not these wandring opinions to pass

pass unexamined ; but searching into the Scriptures, and into all Bookes of Controversie that he could get, both old and new, and finding more then same or opinion, he began to taste their nature so well, as he entertaines, loves, and ownes them at length ; and with such zeal, as he became a professor, yea a teacher of them, first to his Wife, Children, and Family, and after to his Friends, and familiar acquaintance, and in comparison, seem'd to neglect all other Affaires ; intending ever to presse this maine point, that *We must wholly, and onely depend on the free and unchangeable love of GOD in the death of Christ, as the onely sure way to salvation* : and this was the summe of all his discourse, and this continued for the space of

of six yeares, or thereabouts, even so long as this fire could keepe it selfe within private walls; but at length, it brake forth into publick meetings, so as the whole Province of *Padua* dawned by the lustre thereof. The Clergy finding the trade of their pardons to decay, and their Purgatory to wax cold, began to bestirre themselves; glosing their actions, first, with calumnious aspersions upon the whole profession; then more plainly striking at *Spira* with grievous accusation, And to effect their purpose, some promise labour, others favour, some advice, others maintenance; all joyne to divide, either his soul from his body, or both from God.

Now was *John Casa*, the Popes Legate, resident at *Venice*,

nise, being by birth a *Florentine*, and one that wanted neither malice against those of this way, nor craftiness to effect his malicious purposes; to him these men repair with out-cries against *Spira*, that he was the man that condemned the received rights of the Church, deluded the Ecclesiastical power, and scandalized the policy thereof; one of no mean ranck, being a man of account and authority, and thereunto learned in the Scriptures, elegant in speech, and in one word a dangerous *Lutheran*, having also many Disciples, and therefore not to be despised.

At this began the *Legate* to cast his eye on the terrible alteration that lately had happened in *Germany*; where, by the means

means of one only *Luther*, the Romish Religion had suffered such a blow, as that it could neither be cured by dissimulation, nor defended by power; but the Clergy must either mend their manners, or lose their dignities. On the other side, when he saw how propense the common people, inhabiting in the bordering Country of *Italy*, were to entertain those new opinions, now thought it no time to dispute or perswade, but with speed repares to the *Senate*, and procures authority from them to send to *Spira*.

Spira by this time had considered with himself of the nature of his courage, how evident and notorious it was, and therefore subject to be envied by such, as neither liked
his

his Person nor Religion ; he perceived that his Opinions were neither retired, nor speculative, but such as aimed at the overthrow of the *Romish* Faction, and a change of policy ; and that his Enemies wanted neither power nor occasion, to call him to an account in publick, when he must either *Apostatize*, and shamefully give his former life, yea, his own conscience, the lye, or endure the utmost malice of his deadly Enemies ; or forsake his Wife, Children, Friends, Goods, Authority, yea, his Deare Country, and betake himself to a forraign people, there to endure a thousand miseries, that do continually wait upon a voluntary exile.

Being

Being thus distracted, and tossed in the restless Waves of doubt, without guide to trust to, or Heaven to fly to for succour, on the suddain, G O D'S Spirit assisting, he felt a calm, and began to discourse with himself, in this manner.

Why wandrest thou thus in uncertainties, unhappy man? cast away fear, put on thy shield, the shield of faith: Where is thy wonted courage, thy goodnes, thy constancy? remember that Christs glory lies at the stake: suffer thou without fear, & he will defend thee, he will tell thee what thou shalt answer; he can beat down all danger, bring thee out of Prison, raise thee from the dead: consider Peter in a dungeon, the Martyrs in the Fire; if thou mak'st a good confession, thou maist indeed go to prison, or death, but an eternal reward in Heaven

B

remains

remains for thee; What hast thou in this world comparable to Eternal life, to everlasting happiness? If thou dost otherwise, think of the scandal; (common people live by example, thinking whatever is done is well done;) fear the loss of peace and joy, fear hell, death, and eternal wrath; or if the flesh be so strong, as to cause thee to doubt of the issue, fly thy Countrey, get thee away, though never so far, rather then deny the Lord of Life.

Now was Spira in reasonable quiet, being resolved to yield to these weighty reasons. Yet holding it wisdom to examine all things, he consults also with flesh and blood: thus the battel doth renew, and the flesh begins in this manner; Be well advised, fond man, consider reasons on both sides,

sides, and then Judge: how canst thou thus overween thine own sufficiency, as thou neither regardst the examples of thy Progenitors, nor the Judgement of the whole Church? dost thou not consider, what misery this thy rashness will bring thee unto? thou shalt lose all thy substance, gotten with so great care and travell, thou shalt undergo the most exquisite torments that malice it self can devise, thou shalt bee counted an Heretick of all, and to close up all, thou shalt dye shamefully. What thinkest thou of the loathsome stinking dungeon, the bloody axe, the burning fagot? Are they delightful? Be wise at length, and keep thy life and honour; thou mayest live to do much good to good men, as God commands thee; thou mayest be an ornament to thy Countrey,

and put case the Countries loss would be of small esteem with thee, wilt thou bring thy friends also into danger? thou hast begotten children, wilt thou now cut their throats, and inhumanely butcher them, who may in time bring honour to their Country, glory to God, help and furtherance to his Church? go to the Legat, weak man, freely confess thy fault, and help all these miseries. Thus did the cares of this World, and the deceitfulness of Riches, choak the good Seed that was formerly sown: so as fearing, hee faints, and yields unto the allurements of this present World; and being thus blinded he goes to the Legat at Venice, and salutes him with this news.

Having for these divers years

years entertained an opinion concerning some Articles of faith, contrary to the Orthodox and received judgment of the Church, and uttered many things against the authority of the Church of Rome, and the universal Bishop, I humbly acknowledge my fault and errour, and my folly in misleading others; I therefore yield my self in all obedience, to the Supream Bishop, into the bosome of the Church of Rome, never to depart again from the Traditions and Decrees of the holy See; I am heartily sorry for what is past, and I humbly beg pardon for so great an offence.

The Legat perceiving Spira to faint, he pursues him to the utmost; he causes a recitation of all his Errours to be drawn in Writing, together

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with the Confession annexed to it. And commands *Spira* to subscribe his name there, which accordingly he did; then the *Legate* commands him to return to his own Town, and there to declare this confession of his, and to acknowledge the whole Doctrine of the Church of *Rome*, to be holy, and true, and to abjure the Opinions of *Luther* and other such Teachers, as false, and Heretical; *Man knows the beginning of sin, but who bounds the issues thereof?* *Spira* having once lost footing, goes down amain, he cannot stay nor gain-say the *Legate*, but promisseth to accomplish his whole will and pleasure: he soon addresseth himself for his Journey: and being onward in the way, be-
thinks

thinks himself of the large spoils he had brought away, from the conflict with the Legate; what glorious testimony he had given of his great Faith, and constancy in Christ's cause; and to be plain, how impiously he had denied Christ, and his Gospel at Venice; and what he promised to do further in his own Countrey: and thus partly with fear, and partly with shame being confounded, he thought he heard a voyce speaking unto him, in this manner.

Spira, What dost thou here? whither goest thou? hast thou, unhappy man, given thy hand-writing to the Legate at Venice? yet see thou dost not seal it in thy own Countrey. Dost thou indeed think eternal Life so
B 4 *mean*

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mean, as that thou preferrest this present life before it? dost thou well in preferring wife and children before Christ? is the windy applause of the people, better indeed than the glory of God? and the possession of this Worlds good more dear to thee, than the salvation of thine own soul? is the small use of a moment of time more desirable, than eternal wrath is dreadful? Think with thy self, what Christ endured for thy sake; is it not equal, thou shouldst suffer somewhat for him? Remember man, that the sufferings of this present life, are not comparable to the glory that shall be revealed. If thou sufferest with him, thou shalt also reign with him: thou canst not answer for what thou hast already done; nevertheless the gate of mercy is not quite shut: take heed that

*that thou heapest not sin upon sin,
lest thou repent when it will be
too late.*

Now was *Spira* in a Wilder-
ness of doubt, not knowing
which way to turn him, nor
what to do; yet being arri-
ved in his own Country, and
amongst his friends, what
he had done and what he had
further promised to do, and
how the terrour of God on the
one side, and the terrour of this
World on the other side, did
continually rack him; and
therefore he desired of them
advice in this so doubtful a
case: His friends, upon small
deliberation answered, that it
was requisite he should take
heed that he did not in any
wise betray his wife and chil-
dren, and all his friends, into
B 5 danger.

danger, seeing, that by so small a matter as the reciting of a little Schedule, which might be done in less space then half an hour, he might both free himself from present danger, and preserve many that depend upon him; adding moreover, that he could get no credit in relenting from that which he had already in greatest part performed before the *Legate* at *Venice*; and that in the perfect accomplishing thereof, little or no discredit could arise, more then what by the former action already he had sustained; on the other side, if he did not perform his promise made to the *Legate*, he could neither discharge himself of the shame which he had already incurred, nor avoid farre more

more heavy and insupportable injuries, then probably hee should have endured, if he had persisted obstinately in his former Opinions.

This was the last blow of the battel; and *Spira* utterly overcome, goes to the Prætor, and profers to performe his promise made to the *Legate*, who in the mean time, had taken order to have all things ready, and had sent the instrument of abjuration signed by *Spira*, to the Prætor, by the hands of a certain Priest. All that night the miserable man wares out with restless cares, without any minute of rest; the next morning being come, he gets up, and being ready, he desperately enters into the publick Congregation, where Mass being finished, in the presence

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presence of friends and Enemies, and of the whole Assembly, being by estimation near two thousand people, yea. and of Heaven it self, he recites that infamous abjuration, word for word as it was written; it being done, he was fined at thirty pieces of gold, which he presently paid, five whereof were given to the Priest that brought the abjuration, the other twenty-five were imployed towards the making of a *Shrine* to put the *Eucharist* in; then was he sent home, restored to his Dignities, Goods, Wife, and Children: No sooner was he departed, but he thought he heard a dreadful voice, saying to him, *Thou wicked wretch, thou hast denied me, thou hast renounced the covenant of thy obedience, thou hast broken*

broken thy vow ; hence Apostate,
bear with thee the sentence of thy
eternal damnation ; he trem-
bling and quaking in body and
mind, fell down in a swoond:
relief was at hand for the bo-
dy, but from that time for-
ward he never found any peace
or ease of mind, but continu-
ing in uncessant torments, he
protested that he was captived
under the revenging hand of
the great God, that he heard
continually that fearful sen-
tence of Christ, that just Judge,
that he knew he was utterly
undone ; that he could neither
hope for Grace, nor Christ's in-
tercession with God the Father
in his behalf: thus was his fault
ever heavy on his heart, and
ever his Judgment before his
eyes.

Now began his friends,
some

some of them, to repent too late of their rash counsell : others not looking so high as the Judgement of God, laid all the blame upon his Melancholick constitution ; that overshadowing his Judgement, wrought in him a kind of madness : every one censured as his fancy led him, yet for remedy all agreed in this, to use both the wholesome help of Physicians, and the pious advice of Divines, and therefore thought it meet to convey him to *Padua*, an University of note, where plenty of all manner of meanes was to be had ; this they accordingly did, both with his Wife, Children, and whole family, others also of his friends accompanying him ; and being arrived at the house of one *James Ardin*, in Saint

Saint *Leonards* Parish, they sent for three Physitians of most note, who upon due observation of the effects, and of other Symptomes of his disease, and some private conference one with another, amongst themselves, returned their verdict in this manner, *viz.* That they could not discern that his body was afflicted with any danger or distemper Originally from it self, by reason of the over-ruling of any humour; but that this Malady of his did arise from some grief or passion of his mind, which being over-burdened, did so oppress the spirits, as they wanting free passage, stirred up many ill humours, whereof the body of man is full; and these ascending up into the brain, troubled the fancy, shadowed

shadowed the seat of the judgment, and so corrupted it. This was the state of his disease, and that outward part that was visible to the eye of nature; this they endeavoured to reform by purgation, either to consume, or at least to divert the course of those humours from the brain; but all their skill effected nothing, which Spira noting, said, *Alas poor men! how far wide are you? do you think that this disease is to be cured by potions? believe me there must be another manner of medicine; it is neither plaisters, nor drugs, that can help a fainting soul, cast down with the sense of sin, and wrath of God; 'tis onely Christ that must be the Physitian, and the Gospel the souls Antidote.*

The Physicians easily believed

lieved him, after they had understood the whole truth of the matter, and therefore they wished him to seek some spiritual comfort. By this time the fame of this man was spread over all *Padua*, and the neighbour Country ; partly for that he was a man of Esteeme ; partly because as the disease, so the occasion was especially remarkeable ; for this was not done in a corner ; so as dayly there came multitudes of all sorts to see him ; some out of curiosity, onely to see and discourse ; some out of a pious desire to try all means that might reduce him to comfort againe : or at least to benefit themselves by such a spectacle of misery , and of the justice of God. Amongst these *Paulus Vergerus* Bishop of *Justi-*

Justinopolis and *Mattheus Grimbaldus*, deserve especially to be named as the most principal labourers for this mans comfort. They find him now about fifty years of age, neither affected with the dotage of old age, nor with the unconstant head-strong passion of youth, but in the strength of his experience and judgement; in a burning heat, calling excessively for drink; yet his understanding active, quick of apprehension, witty in discourse above his ordinary manner, and judiciously apposite; his friends laboured with him by all fair means to receive some nourishment, which he obstinately gain-saying, they forcibly infused some liquid sustenance into his mouth, most of which he spit out again.

gain, exceedingly chafing, and in this fretting mood of his, said; As it is true, *that all things work for the best to those that love God*, so to the wicked all are contrary; for whereas a plentiful off-spring is the Blessing of God, and his reward, being a stay to the weak estate of their aged parents, to me they are a cause of bitterness and vexation, they do strive to make me tire out this misery; I would fain be at an end; I deserve not this dealing at their hands; Oh! that I were gone from hence, that some body would let out this weary Soul.

His friends saluted him, and asked him, what he conceived to be the cause of his disease; forthwith he brake out into a lamentable discourse of the passages formerly related, and that

that with such passionate Elocution, that he caused many to weep, and most to tremble. They contrarily, to comfort him, propounded many of God's promises recorded in the Scripture, and many examples of God's mercy: *My sin* (said he) *is greater than the mercy of God.* Nay, answered they, the mercy of God is above all sin; God would have all men to be saved; *It's true* (quoth he) *he would have all that he hath elected to be saved; he would not have damned Reprobates to be saved: I am one of that number, I know it, for I willingly and against my knowledge denied Christ; and I feel that he hardens, and will not suffer me to hope.*

After some silence, one asked him, whether he did not believe

believe that Doctrine to be true, for which he was accused before the Legat? He answered; *I did believe it, when I denied it; but now I neither believe that, nor the doctrine of the Roman Church: I believe nothing, I have no faith, no trust, no hope; I am a Reprobate like Cain or Judas, who casting away all hope of mercy, fell into despair; and my friends do me great wrong, that they suffer me not to go to the place of Unbelievers, as I justly deserve.*

Here they began sharply to rebuke him; requiring, and charging him, that in any wise he did not violate the mercy of God; to which he answered, 'The mercy of God is exceeding large, and extends to all the Elect, but not to me, or any like to me, who are sealed up
'to

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‘to wrath; I tell you I deserve it,
‘my own conscience condemns
‘me, what needeth any other
‘Judge? Christ came (said they)
‘to take away sin, *Rom. 2, 15.* and
‘calling for a book, they read un-
‘to him the Passion of Christ; and
‘coming to his nailing to the
‘Cross, *Spira* said, ‘This indeed
‘is comfortable to such as are
‘Elected, but as for me wretch,
‘they are nothing but grief and
‘torment, because I contemned
‘them. Thus roaring for grief,
‘and tossing himself up and
‘down upon the bed as he lay,
‘he intreated them to read no
‘more. As *Gribauldus* was com-
‘ing to see him, *Vergerius* said
‘to *Spira*, dear Sir, here is
‘Doctor *Gribauldus*, a godly and
‘faithful friend of yours, come
‘to see you. ‘He is welcome
‘(said he) but he shall find
‘me

'me ill : *Gribouldus* replied,
Sir, this is but an illusion of
the Devil, who doth what he
can to vex you ; but turn you
to God with your whole
heart, and he is ready to shew
you mercy ; the Lord you
know is full of mercy, it is
he that hath said, that as often
as a sinner repents of his sin, he
will remember his sins no more.
Consider this in the Example
of *Peter*, that was Christs fami-
liar, and an Apostle, and yet
denyed him thrice with an
Oath, and yet God was merci-
ful unto him : Consider
the Thief that spent his whole
life in wickedness, and for all
that, did not God graciously
respect him in the last minute
of his life? Is the Lords hand
now shortned that it cannot
save? To this *Spira* answered :

If

If Peter grieved and repented, it was because Christ beheld him with a merciful eye: and in that he was pardoned, it was not because he wept, but because God was gracious to him; but God respects not me, and therefore I am a Reprobate; I feel no comfort can enter into my heart; there's place there only for torments and vexings of spirit; I tell you my case is properly mine own, no man was ever in the like plight, and therefore my estate is fearful.

Then roaring out in the bitterness of his spirit, said, *It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*; the violence of his passion and action suitable, did amaze many of the Beholders; insomuch as some of them said with a whispering voice, that he was possessed;

possessed; he over-hearing it, said, *Do you doubt it? I have a whole Legion of Devils that take up their dwelling within me, and possess me as their own; and justly too, for I have denied Christ. Whether did you that willingly or not? (said they.) That's nothing to the purpose (said Spira) Christ saith, Whosoever denies me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in Heaven; Christ will not be denied, no not in a word; and therefore it is enough, though in heart I never denied him.*

They observing his distemper to arise from the sense and horror of the pains of Hell, asked him whether he thought there were worse pains then what he endured for the present? he said, "That he knew there were far worse pains than
C those

those that he then suffered, for
the wicked shall rise to their
judgment, but they shall not
stand in judgment, (*Psal. 1.*) this
I tremble to think of, yet do I
desire nothing more, than that
I might come to that place
where I may be sure to feel the
worst, and to be freed from fear
of worse to come.

I, but you are to consider (said
one) that those Opinions for
which you were accused before
the *Legat*, were impious, and
therefore you are not to think
you denied Christ, but rather
that you confessed him, ac-
knowledging the infallible truth
of the Catholick Church. Truly
(said he) when I did deny
those Opinions, I did think
them to be true, and yet I did
deny them.

Go to (said others) now
then

then believe that they are true.
'Now I cannot (said he) God
'will not suffer me to believe
'them, nor trust in his mercy ;
'what would you have me to
'do? I would fain attain to this
'power, but cannot, though I
'should presently be burnt for
'it. But why do you, said the
other, esteem this so grievous a
sin, whenas the learned *Legat*
constrained you to it; which
he surely would not have done,
if your former Opinions had
not been erroneous: No, good
Francis, the Devil besets thee,
let not therefore the grievous-
ness of thy sin (if any such
be) amaze thee. 'You say right
(replied he) the Devil hath
possest me, and God hath left
me to his Power; for I find
I can neither believe the Gos-
pel, nor trust in God's mercy.

‘ I have sinned against the holy
‘ Ghost, and God by his immuta-
‘ ble decree hath bound me over
‘ to perpetual punishment with-
‘ out any hope of pardon. Its true
‘ that the greatness of sin, nor the
‘ multitude of them, bind not
‘ Gods mercy; all those sins that
‘ in the former part of my life I
‘ have committed, then did not
‘ so much trouble me, for I trust-
‘ ed God would not lay them to
‘ my charge: now having sin’d a-
‘ gainst the holy Ghost, God hath
‘ taken away from me all power
‘ of repentance, & brings all my
‘ sins to remembrance; and guilty
‘ of one, guilty of all. And there-
‘ fore its no matter whether my
‘ sins be great or smal, few or ma-
‘ ny; they be such as Christs blood
‘ nor Gods mercy belongs to me.
‘ God will have mercy on whom
‘ he will have mercy; and
whom

‘whom he will he hardneth;
‘this is it that gnaws my heart,
‘he hath hardned me; and I
‘find that he dayly more and
‘more doth harden me, and
‘therefore I am out of hope; I
‘feel it, therefore cannot but
‘despair. I tell you, there was ne-
‘ver such a Monster as I am, ne-
‘ver was any man alive a specta-
‘cle of exceeding misery. I knew
‘that justification is to be expe-
‘cted by Christ, and I denied and
‘abjured it, to the end I might
‘keep this frail life from adver-
‘sity, and my children from po-
‘verty: and now behold how
‘bitter this life is to me, and God
‘only knows what shall become
‘of this my Family; but sure no
‘good is likely to betide it, but
‘worse and worse, and such a
‘ruine at length, as one stone
‘shall not be left upon another.

But why should you (said *Gri-
bouldus*) conceit so deeply of
your sin, seeing you cannot but
know, that many have denied
Christ, yet never fell into de-
spair? Well (said he) I can see
no ground of comfort for
such, neither can I warrant
them from Gods revenging
hand in wrath, though it plea-
seth God yet to suffer such to
be in peace: and besides, there
will a time of danger come, and
then they shall be thoroughly
tried; and if it were not so, yet
God is just in making me an
example to others; and I cannot
justly complain; there is no
punishment so great, but I have
deserved it, for this so heinous
offence. I assure you it is no
small matter to deny Christ, and
yet it is more ordinary than
commonly men do conceive of;
it

it is not a denial made before a
Magistrate, as it is with me; for
as often as a Christian doth dis-
semble the known truth; as of-
ten as he approves of false wor-
ship, by presenting himself at it;
so often as he hath not things
worthy of his calling, or doth
such things as are unworthy of
his calling, so often he denies
Christ; thus did I, and therefore
am justly punished for it. Your
Estate (quoth *Gribauldus*) is not
so strange as you make it. *Job*
was so far gone, that he com-
plained God had set him as a
mark against him; and *David*
that was a man after Gods own
heart, complained often that
God had forsaken him, and was
become his Enemy, yet both
received comfort again. Com-
fort your self therefore, God
will come at length, though

he now seem farre off.

O Brother (answered Spira)
I believe all this, the Devils be-
lieve and tremble ; but David
was ever Eleſted, and dearly be-
loved of God ; and though he fell,
yet God took not utterly away
his holy Spirit , and therefore
was heard when he prayed, Lord
take not thy holy Spirit from
me : but I am in another caſe,
being ever accuſed from the pre-
ſence of God ; neither can I pray
as he did, becauſe his holy Spirit
is quite gone, and cannot be re-
called ; and therefore I know I
ſhall live in continuall hardneſſe
ſo long as I live, Oh that I might
feel but the leaſt ſenſe of the love
of God to me, though but for one
ſmall moment, as I now feel his
heavy wrath that burns like the
torments of hell within me, and
afflicts my conſcience with pangs
unuttera-

*unutterable: verily Desparation
is Hell it self.*

Here *Gribauldus* said, I do verily believe, *Spira*, that God having so severely chastised you in this life, correcteth you in mercy here, that he may spare you hereafter, and that he hath mercy sealed up for you in time to come.

Nay (said *Spira*) hence do I know that I am a Reprobate, because he afflicteth me with hardness of heart: O that my body had suffered all my life long, so that he would be pleased to release my soul, and ease my conscience, this burdned conscience.

Gribauldus being desirous to ease his mind from the continual meditation of his sins, as also to sound how for the present he stood affected to the Romish Church, asked him

C 5 what

42 *A relation of the fearful*

what he thought became of the souls of men so soon as they departed out of the body; to which he answered :

‘ Although this be not so fully
‘ revealed in Scripture, yet I ve-
‘ rily believe that the souls of the
‘ Elect go presently to the King-
‘ dom of glory, and not that they
sleep with the body, as some do
imagine :

Very well said one of the Spectators, why do the Scriptures then say (1 Sam. 5. 9.) that God brings down to Hell, and raiseth up, seeing it cannot be meant of the estate of the soul after death, which as thou saist either goeth to Heaven without change, or to Hell without Redemption; it must be understood of the Estate of the soul in this life, like that wherein thou art at this present: and
often.

oftentimes we see that God suffers men to fall into the jaws of despair, and yet raiseth them up again; and therefore despair not, but hope; it shall be even thus with thee in his good time.

This is the work (quoth Spira) this the labour; for I tell you when I at Venice did first adjure my profession, and so, as it were, drew an indenture, the Spirit of God often admonished me; and when at Cittadella I did as it were set to my seal, the Spirit of God often suggested to me, do not write Spira, do not seal: yet I resisted the holy Ghost, and did both: and at that very present I did evidently feel a wound inflicted in my very will: so although I can say, I would believe, yet can I not say I will believe. God hath denied me the power of
will.

will, and it befalls me in this my miserable Estate, as with one that is fast in Irons, and his friends coming to see him, do pity his Estate, and do perswade him to shake off his fetters, and to come out of his bonds; which God knows he would fain do, but cannot; this is my very case, you perswade me to believe, how fain would I do it, but cannot, O now I cannot. Then violently grasping his hands together, and raising himself up, Behold, (said he) I am strong, yet by little and little I decay and consume, and my servants would fain preserve this weary life, but at length the will of God must be done, and I shall perish miserably, as I deserve: Rejoyce ye Righteous in the Lord, blessed are you whose hearts the Lord hath mollified.

Then

Then after some pause, *It's wonderful, I earnestly desire to pray to God with my heart, yet I cannot; I see my damnation, and I know my remedy is only in Christ, yet I cannot set myself to take hold on it: such are the punishments of the damned; they confess what I confess, they repent of their loss of Heaven, they cannot mend their ways.*

As he was thus speaking, he observed divers Flies that came about him, and some lighted on him; 'Behold, *said he*, now al-
' so * *Belzeebub* comes to his Ban-
' quet; you shall shortly see my
' end, and in me an example to
' many, of the Justice and Judg-
ment of God.

About this time came in
two Bishops, with divers Scho-

Scholars of the University, one of them being *Paulus Vergerius*, having observed *Spira* more then any other, being continually conversant with him, told him his Estate was such as rather stood in need of Prayer than Advice; and therefore desired him to pray with him in the Lords Prayer: *Spira* consented, and he began;

Our Father which art in Heaven] then breaking forth into tears he stopped; but they said, It is well, your grief is a good sign. 'I bewail (said he) my misery, for I perceive I am forsaken of God, and cannot call to him from my heart, as I was wont to do: Yet let us go on said *Vergerius*.

Thy Kingdom come] O Lord (said *Spira*) bring me also into this Kingdom; I beseech thee
shut

shut me not out. Then coming to those words [*Give us this day our dayly bread*] he added, 'O Lord I have enough, and abundance to feed this carcass of mine; but there is another bread I humbly beg, the bread of thy Grace, without which I know I am but a dead man.

Lead us not into temptation] 'Seeing Lord, that I am brought into temptation, help me Lord, that I may escape; the enemy hath overcome; help me, I beseech thee to overcome this cruel Tyrant.

These things he spake with a mournful voice, the tears trickling down abundantly; and expressing such affections and passion, as turned the bowels of those there present with grief and compunction; they then turning to *Spira*, said, You know

know that none can call *Christ Jesus* the *Lord*, but by the Holy Ghost: you must therefore think of your self, according to that soft affection, which you express in your prayers, inferring thereby that God hath not wholly cast you off, or bereaved you of his Spirit utterly.

“I perceive said *Spira*, that I call on him to my eternal damnation; for I tell you again, it is a new and unheard of example, that you find in me. If *Judas* (said they) had but out-lived his days, which by nature he might have done, he might have repented, and Christ would have received him to mercy; and yet he sinned most grievously against his Master, which did so esteem of him, as to honour him with the dignity of an Apostle, and did maintain
and

and feed him. He answered, Christ did also feed and honour me, neither yet is my fault one jot less then that of his, because it is no more honour to be personally present with Christ in the flesh, than to be in his presence now by illumination of his holy Spirit; and besides, I deny that ever *Judas* could have repented how long soever he had lived; for grace was quite taken from him, as it is now from me.

O *Spira*, said they, you know you are in a spiritual desertion; you must therefore not believe what Satan suggests, he was ever a Lier from the beginning, and a meer Impostor, and will cast a thousand lying fancies into your mind, to beguile you withal; you must rather believe

lieve those whom you judge to be in a good estate, and more able to discern of you than your self: believe us, and we tell you that God will be merciful unto you.

‘O here is the knot (said *Spira*) I would I could believe, but I cannot.

Then he began to reckon up what fearful dreams and visions he was continually troubled withal: that he saw the Devils come flocking into the Chamber, and about his Bed, terrifying him with strange noises; that these were not fantasies, but that he saw them as really, as the standers by: and that besides these outward terrors, he felt continually a racking torture of his mind, and a continual butchery of his Conscience, being the very proper pangs

pangs of the damned wights in Hell.

Cast away these fantasies (said *Gribanldus*) these are but illusions; humble your self in the presence of God, and praise him. "The dead praise not the Lord (answered he) nor they that go down into the pit. We that are drowned in despair are dead, and already gone down into the pit; what Hell can there be worse than Desperation, or what greater punishment? The gnawing Worm, Unquenchable Fire, Horror, Confusion, and (which is worse than all) Desperation it self continually tortures me, and now I count my present estate worse, than if my soul separated from my body were with *Judas*, and the rest of the damned; and therefore, now
desire

‘ desire rather to be there, than
‘ thus to live in the body.

One being present repeated certain words out of the Psalms:
*If thy Children forsake my Law
and walk not in my judgments;
I will visit their transgressions
with rods, and their iniquity
with stripes; nevertheless my
loving kindness I will not ut-
terly take from them, nor suffer
my faithfulness to fail. Mark
this, O Spira, My Covenant I
will not break.*

“These promises (said Spira)
belong onely to the Elect,
which if tempted, may fall in-
to sin, but are again lifted up
and recovered out: as the
Prophet saith, though he fall
he shall not be utterly cast
down, for the Lord uphold-
eth him, therefore Peter could
rise, for he was elected; but
the

the Reprobate when they fall, cannot rise again, as appears in *Cain, Saul, and Judas*; God deals one way with the Elect, and another with Reprobates.

The next day he prayed with them in the Latine Tongue, and that with excellent affection, as outwardly appeared. Blessed be God, said *Vergerius*, these are no signs of eternal reprobation; you must not, O *Spira*, seek out the secret Counsels of Gods Election and Reprobation; for no man can know, so long as he lives, whether by his good or bad deeds, he be worthy of Gods love or anger: do you not know that the Prophet *David* complained, that God had cast off his soul.

I know all this, quoth Spira, I know the mercies of God are infinite, and do surpass the sins of the whole

whole world, and that they are effectual to all that believe, but this faith, and this hope is the gift of God: O that he would give it me! but it is as impossible as to drink up the Sea at a draught: as for that of Solomon, if he had ever tasted that which I feel by wofull experience, he would never have spoken as he did; but the truth is, never had mortall man such an evident experience of Gods anger and hatred against him, as I have. You that are in good estate, think repentance and faith to be work of great facility: and therefore you think it an easie matter to perswade a man to believe: the whole need not the Physician; and he that is well can soon give counsel to such as are ill: but this is the hell to me, my heart is hardned, I cannot believe; many are called, but few are chosen.

Upon

Upon what ground (said they) do you conceive so ill an opinion of your self.

“ I once did know God to be
‘ my Father, not only by Crea-
‘ tion, but by Regeneration; I
‘ knew him by his beloved Son,
‘ the Author and Finisher of our
‘ Salvation; I could pray to him,
‘ and hope for pardon of sins from
‘ him; I had a taste of his sweet-
‘ ness, peace, and comfort; now
‘ contrarily, I know God, not as
‘ a Father, but as an Enemy;
‘ what more? my heart hates
‘ God, and seeks to get above
‘ him, I have nothing else to fly
‘ to but terror and despair.

Belike you think then (said they) that those who have the earnest and first-fruits of God's Spirit, may notwithstanding fall away.

*The judgments of God are a
deep*

deep abyſs, ſaid he, we are ſoon drowned if we enter into them; He that thinks he ſtandeth, let him take heed leſt he fall; as for my ſelf, I know I am fallen back, and that I once did know the truth, though it may be not ſo thoroughly; I know not what to ſay, but that I am one of that number which God hath threatened to tear in pieces.

Say not ſo, answered they, for God may come, though at the laſt hour; keep hold therefore, at the leaſt by hope.

This, quoth he, is my caſe; I tell you I cannot, God hath deprived me of hope, this brings terror to my mind, and pines this body which now is ſo weak, as it cannot perform the ſeveral Offices thereof: for as the Eleſt have the Spirit teſtifying that they are the ſons of God,

God, so the Reprobates, even while they live, do often feel a Worm in their Consciences, whereby they are condemned already: and therefore as I perceived this wound inflicted on my mind and will, I knew that I wanted the gifts of saving grace, and that I was utterly undone. God chastneth his children with temporary afflictions, that they may come as Gold out of the fire; but punisheth the wicked with blindness in their understandings, and hardness of heart; and wo be to such from whom God takes his holy Spirit.

Here one rebuked him, and told him he gave too much credit to sense, that he was not to believe himself, but rather him that was in a good estate; and I testifie to you (said he) that God will be merciful to you.

D

Nay.

Nay, answered he, for because I am in this ill estate, therefore can I believe nothing but what is contrary to my salvation and comfort; but you that are so confident of your good Estate, look that it be true, for it is no such small matter to be assured of sincerity; a man had need be exceeding strongly grounded in the truth, before he can be able to affirm such a matter as you now do. It is not the performance of a few outward duties, but a mighty constant labour, with all intention of heart and affection, with full desire and endeavour continually to set forth Gods glory; there must be neither fear of Legators, Inquisitors, Prisons, nor any death whatsoever; many think themselves happy, that are not; it is not every one that saith Lord, Lord, that shall go to Heaven.

They

They came another day, and found him with his eyes shut, as if he had been drowzie and very loath to discourse; at which time there came in also a grave man from *Cittadella*, who demanded of *Spira*, if he knew him or not. He lifting up his eye-lids, and not suddenly remembering him, the man said to him, *I am Presbyter Antonie Fontamia*, I was with you at *Venice* some 8 weeks since; 'O cursed day, said *Spira*! Oh cursed day! Oh that I had never gone thither! Would God I had then died.

Afterwards came in a Priest, called *Bernardinus Sardonius*, bringing with him a Book of Exorcisms to conjure this Devil; whom when *Spira* saw, shaking his head he said:

'I am verily perswaded indeed,

‘that God hath left me to the
‘power of the Devil : but such
‘they are, as are not to be
‘found in your Letany ; nei-
‘ther will they be cast out by
‘spells. The Preist proceeding
in his intended purpose, with a
strange uncouth gesture, and a
loud voice, adjured the spirit to
come into *Spira's* tongue, and to
answer: *Spira* deriding his fruit-
less labour, with a sigh, turned
from him ; a Bishop being there
present, said to *Spira*, brother,
God hath put vertue into the
Word and Sacraments ; and we
have used the one means, and
find not that effect which we
desire ; shall we try the efficacy
of the Sacraments? surely if you
take it, as a true Christian ought
to receive the body and blood
of Christ, it will prove a so-
veraign medicine for your sick
soul.

‘This

'This *I* cannot do (answered
'he) for they that have no right
'to the promises, have no right
'to the seals. The Eucharist
'was appointed only for beleiv-
'ers; if we have not faith, we eat
'and drink judgement to our
'selvs; I receiv'd it about a month
'since, but *I* did not well in so
'doing; for I took it by constraint,
'and so *I* took it to my deeper
'condemnation.

Here *Vergerius* began to im-
portune him earnestly [to be-
ware that he did not wilfully
to resist grace, and put himself
out of Heaven, charging him
vehemently, by all the love
that was between them, by the
love that he bare to his chil-
dren, yea to his own soul,
that he would set himself seri-
ously to return to that Faith
and hope, which once he had

in the death of Christ; with many such like words. *Spina* having heard much of the like matter formerly, and being somewhat moved, said, You do but repeat, *Vergerius*, what should I hope? why should I believe? God hath taken faith from me; shew me then whither I shall go, shew me a Haven whereto I shall retire. You tell me of Gods mercy, when as God hath cast me off; you tell me of Christs intercession, I have denied him; you command me to believe, I say, I cannot; you bring me no comfort, your command is as impossible for me to obey as to keep Moral Law: if you should perswade one to love God with all his heart, soul and strength, and God gives him not power, can he perform your desire? Doth not the Church teach us to sing, *Direct*

rect us, O Lord, to love thy Com-
 mandements? Hypocrites say that
 they love God with all their heart,
 but they lie; for my part I will
 not lie, but tell you plainly, Such
 is my case, that though you should
 never so much importune me to
 hope or believe, though I desire it.
 yet I cannot, for God as a punish-
 ment of my wickedness, hath ta-
 ken away from me all his saving
 graces, faith, hope, and all: I am
 not the man therefore that you
 take me for: Belike you think I
 delight in this Estate; if I could
 conceive but the least spark of
 hope of a better Estate hereafter,
 I would not refuse to endure the
 most heavy weight of the wrath of
 that great God, yea, for twenty
 thousand years, so that I might at
 length attain to the end of that
 misery, which I now know will be
 eternal. But I tell you, my will

is wound, who longs more to believe then I do? but all the ground-work of hope is gone, for if the Testimonies of holy Scripture be true (as they are certainly true) is not this as true, whosoever denies me before men, him *saith Christ*, will I deny before my Father which is in heaven? is not this justly my case as if it had been intended against this very person of mine? And I pray you what shall become of such as Christ denieth, seeing there is no other name under heaven whereby you look to be saved? What *saith St. Paul* to the *Hebrews*? It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, & were partakers of the holy Ghost, if they fall away, to be renewed to repentance; what can be more plain
against

against me? is not that Scripture also; if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a looking for of judgement: the Scripture speaks of me, *St. Paul* meets me, *Saint Peter* tells me, it had been better I had never known the way of righteousness, then after I have known, to turn from the holy Commandement, it had been better I had not known, and yet then my condemnation had been most certain; do you not see evidently, that I have wilfully denied the known truth; I may justly expect not only damnation, but worse if worse may be imagined. God will have me undergoe the just punishment of my sin, and make me an example of his wrath for your sakes.

The Company present admired his discourse, so grievously accusing himself of his fore-past life, so gravely and wisely dilating concerning the Judgments of God, that they then were convinced, that it was not Frenzie or Madnes that had possessed him, and being as it were in admiration of his Estate, *Spira* proceeded again in this manner. 'Take heed to your selves, it is no
2 'light or easie matter to be a
'Christian; it is not Baptism
'or reading of the Scriptures,
'or boasting of faith in Christ,
'(though even these are good)
'that can prove one to be an
'absolute Christian': you know
3 'what I said before, there
'must be a conformity in life.
'A Christian must be strong,
'unconquerable, not carrying
an

an obscure profession, but resolute, expressing the image of Christ, and holding out against all opposition to the last breath, he must give all diligence, by Righteousness and Holiness, to make his Calling and Election sure. Many there are that snatch at the Promises in the Gospel, as if they undoubtedly did belong to them, and yet they remain sluggish, and careless; and being flattered by the things of this present world, they pass in their course in quietness and security, as if they were the onely happy men; whom nevertheless the Lord in his providence hath ordained to eternal wrath, as you may see in Saint *Lukes* Rich Man. Thus it was with me, therefore take ye heed.

Then

Then came one of his Nephews, and offered him some sustenance, which he disdainfully refusing, so moved the young mans chollar, that he charged him with hypocrisie and dissimulation, or frenzy; to whom *Spira* gravely answering, said,

You may interpret the matter as you will: but *I* am sure *I* am not only the Actor, but the Argument and matter of the Tragedie; *I* would it were frenzy either fained or true, for if it were frenzy *I* could put it off at pleasure; if it were a real frenzy, yet there were some hope left of Gods mercy, where as now there is none. For *I* know God hath pronounced me an enemy, and guilty of high treason against his Majesty; *I* am a cast-away, a vessel of wrath: yet
dar^o

dare you call it dissembling and frenzy? and can you mock at the formidable example of the heavy wrath of God, that should teach you fear and terror: But it is natural to the flesh, either out of malice or ignorance, to speak perversely of the works of God. The natural man discerneth not the things that be of God, because they are spiritually discerned.

How can this be (said Gri-
bauldus) that you can thus excellently discourse of the judgments of God, and of the graces of his holy Spirit, that you find the want of them, and earnestly desire them; and yet you think you are utterly deprived of them.

Take this for certain (saith he) want the main grace of all, and that which is absolutely necessary, and God doth many times exhort
most

most true and strange testimonies of his majesty, justice and mercy; yea, out of the mouthes of very reprobates: for even Judas, after he had betrayed his Master, was constrained to confess his sin, and to justifie the innocency of Christ; and therefore if I do the like, it is no new or strange matter. God hath taken Faith from me, & lest me other common gifts, for my deeper condemnation: By how much the more I remember what I had, and hear others discourse of what they have, by so much the more is my torment, in that I know what I want, and how there is no way to be relieved.

Thus spake he, the tears all the while trickling down; professing that his pangs were such, as that the damned Wights in Hell endure not the like misery; that his estate was worse

worse than that of *Cain* or *Judas*, and therefore he desired to die. Yet behold (saith he) *the Scriptures are accomplished in me, They shall desire to die, and Death shall fly from them.* And verily, he seemed exceedingly to fear, lest his life should be drawn out to a longer thred; and finding no ease or rest, ever and anon, cried out, *O miserable wretch, O miserable wretch*; then turning to the Company, he besought them in this manner.

O Brethren! take a diligent heed to your life; make more account of the gifts of Gods Spirit than I have done; learn to beware of my misery; think not you are assured Christians, because you understand something of the Gospel; take heed you grow not secure on that ground; be constant and immovable

moveable in the maintenance of your profession: Confess even until death, if you be called thereto; he that loveth Father, Mother, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, kindred, houses, lands, more then Christ, is not worthy of him.

These words (saied they) do not sound like the words of a wicked reprobate.

I do but here imitate (saith Spira) the rich glutton in the Gospel, who though in hell, yet was careful that his brethren should not come to that place of torment: And I say to you brethren, take heed of this miserable estate wherein I am.

Then turning himself to certain young men that were present, he desired them to conceive him aright. 'I do not speak
' this to derogate from the certainty of saving faith, and the
promises

‘ promises of the Gospel, for
‘ they are most sure ; but take
‘ heed of relying on that
‘ faith that works not a holy
‘ and unblameable life, worthy
‘ of a beleiver ; credit me it will
‘ fail, *I* have tried it, *I* presumed
‘ *I* had gotten the right faith ; *I*
‘ preached it to others, *I* had all
‘ places of Scripture in memory
‘ that might support it, *I* thought
‘ my self sure, and in the mean
‘ time living impiously & care-
‘ lessly, behold now the judge-
‘ ment of God hath overtaken
‘ me, not to correction, but to
‘ condemnation : And now you
‘ would have me to beleive, but
‘ it will not be, for *I* feel too late
‘ that good things belong only
‘ to such as are good, whose sins
‘ are covered with Christ’s death
‘ and blood, as with a vail, and
‘ guarded with his righteous
merits

merits from the flood of Gods
wrath, even as with a mighty
wall, lest miserable mortals
should be swallowed up with
greatness of their sin: but as
for me, I have as it were, wil-
fully with my hands pulled
down this Rampire, behind
which I might have rested in
safety, and now are the swell-
ing Waters come even to my
soul, and I am cast away.

One of his familiar Friends
chanced to say, That certainly
he was overcome with melan-
choly; which being over-heard,
Spira answered.

*Well, be it so, seeing you will
needs have it so; thus also is Gods
wrath manifested against me, in
that he hath taken from me the
use of mine Understanding and
Reason, so as I can neither rightly
esteem and judge of my distemper,
nor*

nor hope of remedy. You see Brethren, what a dangerous thing it is to stop or stay in things that concern Gods glory, especially to dissemble upon any terms: What a fearful thing is it to be near, & almost a Christian? Never was the like example to this of mine, and therefore, if you be wise, you will seriously consider thereof. O that God would let loose his hand from me, that it were with me now as in times past, I would scorn the threats of the most cruel Tyrants, bear torments with invincible resolution, and glory in the outward profession of Christ, till I were choaked in the flame, and my body consumed to ashes.

You say you are desperate, O Spira! (said they) why then do you not strive with some weapon or other, violently to make an end of your life, as
despe-

desperate men use to doe? *Let me have a Sword* (said Spira) Why what would you do with it (quoth they?) *I cannot tell you* (said he) *what this mind would move me to, upon occasion, nor what I would do.*

They perceiving small effect of all this their labour, but rather that he grew worse, for the avoiding of concourse of people; for every day seldome fewer then twenty continued with him, and to stop the course of fame which was continually blown abroad of him; they consult to carry him back again into his own Country; and those his friends that came to comfort him, began to take their leaves of him, *Vergerius* amongst the rest, required that at their parting they might pray together with him,

him, *Spira* hardly consented, and as unwillingly performed, for he said, *My heart is estranged from God, I cannot call him Father from my heart; all good motions are now quite gone, my heart is full of malediction, hatred, and blasphemy against God: I find I grow more and more hardened in heart, and cannot stoop nor help my self: your prayers for me shall turn to your own benefit, they can do me no good.*

Vergerius came to take his leave of him, whom *Spira* embracing, said, *Although I know that nothing can bring any benefit to me a reprobate; but that every thing shall tend to my deeper condemnation: yet I give you most hearty thanks for your kind office of love and good will; and the Lord return it unto you*

you, with a plentiful increase of all good.

The next day being brought down to his intended journey, by the way looking round about him with a ghastly look, he saw a knife lying on a table, to which he running hastily, snatched hold of it, as intending to mischief himself; but his friends laying hold of him, stopped him in his purpose: whereupon with indignation he said, *I would I were above God, for I know he will have no mercy on me.*

Thus went he homewards, often saying, that he envied the condition of *Cain* and *Judas*: He lay about eight weeks in this case, in a continual burning, neither desiring, nor receiving any thing but by force, and that without digestion

stion, so spent, that he appeared a perfect Anatomie, expressing to the view nothing but sinews and bones: vehemently raging for drink, ever pining, yet fearful to live long; dreadful of Hell, yet coveting death; in a continual torment, yet his own Tormentor. And thus consuming himself with grief and horror, impatience and despair, like a living man in Hell, he represented an extraordinary example of the justice and power of God. And thus (as far as appeareth) within a few dayes after his arrival at his own home, he departed this present life. Yet an occasion to make us remember, *That secret things belong unto the Lord our God*, but charity to man, to teach him to hope all things.

F I N I S.

Apr. 25, 1531